



8/12 STEPS WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT (PENTECOST!)

It is amazing how often we are introduced to a new dynamic or way of life, and then, because we are aware of it, it seems to be everywhere?! It's a kind of "Aha" experience! We all know a bit about Alzheimer's, but when a friend or loved one is diagnosed and begins to suffer, we become acutely aware of how common it is and end up having conversations with people we never might have had. When a son or a daughter who has graduated from high school or college returns home and needs to "regroup" a bit, we gently, quietly talk around and soon realize how many other families are facing these same challenges. We surely listen with more care.

I have spoken to many people about "recovery programs" for years, and read articles and brochures about 12 step recovery plans. But it wasn't until our congregation studied, discussed, preached about the 12 step Christian recovery program that it began to really sink in. (We condensed those 12 steps to 8 steps for our recently completed 50 Day Spiritual Journey.) The first step is simply: "*We admit our need for God's gift of salvation, that we are powerless over certain areas of our lives and that our lives are at times sinful and unmanageable.*" As a pastor I have known this intellectually, even experientially. But since the conclusion of that journey, I keep running into this reality, day in and day out. Lives and circumstances that are unmanageable, beyond our control, sometimes even sinful. In my life and in yours!

We are now advertising for a new Director of Christian Education and Outreach. Yes, we have control over various tasks – refining the job description, passing it along to various churches, forming a good Hiring Team, etc. But bottom line, securing the right person is really beyond our control. This is God's work. I have looked more intently at some of the (normal) life challenges of some of my adult children. They are now in the world, adult, becoming or already independent. But there are challenges beyond their control, as well as mine as a father. This is when we turn to God. Yes, there are numerous practical things we can do to address life's challenges, but so much is or appears to be beyond our ability to fix them. And so, "*We admit our need for God's gift of salvation, that we are powerless over certain areas of our lives and that our lives are at times sinful and unmanageable.*" And this awareness can lead us to a deeper connection and dependency upon Almighty God, and the Lord Jesus Christ. Praise God!

These eight steps are printed again in our Lion. Read and reread, and when applicable, begin living them. For problems, challenges as well as addictions. And this is where the Pentecost experience blows into our lives. For Christ told his followers as his earthly ministry was coming to a close: "**I will not leave you orphaned. (The Holy Spirit) abides with you.**" As Lutherans we believe that the Holy Spirit "calls, gathers, and enlightens us" (From Luther's explanation of the Holy Spirit in the Apostles Creed). The Spirit of Christ comes to empower and strengthen us. Sounds like the 2nd step of our process, which is: "*We come to believe through the Holy Spirit that a power who came in the person of Jesus Christ and who is greater than ourselves can transform our weaknesses into strengths. Therefore we make a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of Jesus.*" May we open ourselves, admit our vulnerabilities and arenas beyond our control, and breathe in the Spirit of God. And, then, amazing, amazing things happen. Praise God.